

FORM NO. <b>1146203</b>			CLASSIFICATION <del>UNCLASSIFIED</del>			CARD NO. <b>4091017</b>		
CODE <b>491</b>			COUNTRY <b>USSR</b>			CODE <b>1051</b>		
LOCATION <b>Takhta Tash</b>			INDUSTRIAL CATEGORY CODES <b>46</b>					
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			<b>3 12 53</b>					<b>Turkmen Canl</b>
CIA NO. <b>STATE, OIR, Intell. Rpt No. 6488</b>			AND SOURCE					
MAJOR PRODUCT								

**Apart from the lack of newspaper publicity, there is other evidence that the Turkmen project is now inactive. No local or national official pronouncement since early April has alluded to it, though the context of some of these would seem to have called for some reference.**

**There is also strong indication that equipment used in the construction of this project has been transferred elsewhere. Throughout the history of the "Great Projects" there have been innumerable reports of shipments of machinery and supplies to the construction sites. These reports almost invariably have been limited to specific items and have given the source of origin. Early in 1953 a good deal of publicity was given to the**

**shipment of special 500-ton steel barges to the Turkmen Canal by a Kiev factory, and assembly of these barges at the canal site was reported. Izvestiya on March 4 also stated that 20 barges of this type were to be delivered to the Turkmen Canal in 1953. Turkmeneskaya Iskra on August 16 carried the following items:**

**"A broad program of irrigation construction is being carried out in Turkmenistan. A growing volume of machinery, equipment, and materials is arriving for these projects. Recently nine 500-ton barges arrived at the docks of Kerki. These barges delivered trucks, tractors, scrapers, bulldozers, tools, and prefabricated houses. Eleven more large-capacity barges are on the way, carrying building materials, machines, tools, and spare parts."**

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**The port of Kerki is located on the Amu-Darya River above Tashkent, and serves an important cotton growing area in Chardzhou Oblast, where irrigation is to be extended. Following four months of complete silence about the Turkmen Canal, the reported shipment to Kerki, from an undisclosed point of origin, of a large volume of heavy construction equipment, loaded on the identical number and type of barges previously delivered to the Turkmen Canal, very likely constitutes a transfer from that project. This interpretation is strengthened by reports said by an American correspondent to have circulated in Tashkent that the construction of the Turkmen Canal had been abandoned in favor of more immediately productive irrigation work in existing cotton areas. If this conclusion is correct, it strongly suggests that work on the canal will not be resumed in the near future.**

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**Turkmen Canal.** Work on the fifth project, the Turkmen Canal, appears to have been either suspended or abandoned. Reports on the canal and Takhia-Tash, the major base of operations and site of a proposed power station, dominated the news in Turkmenskaya Iskra until April 4, 1953. Since then no reference to the canal or anything connected with it has been made, and stock phrases previously used in reporting on the project have been applied to various minor activities in the desert area. In March, for example, Turkmenskaya Iskra carried a story entitled "The General Attack Upon the Kara-Kum Has Started," which reported the beginning of

excavation of the main bed of the Turkmen Canal. In May the same paper featured an article "Lights in the Kara-Kum." Opening with the statement that "the attack upon the Kara-Kum developed with great force during the years of Stalin's five-year plans," the article discussed sulphur mining in the desert without making any reference to the Turkmen project.

The usual reports of pledges for greater production published on occasions such as the May 1 holiday have omitted reference to Takhia-Tash, which had figured prominently in such reports during the preceding two years.

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**The Main Turkmen Canal** originally scheduled for completion by 1957, was planned to link Lake Aral and the Amu-Darya River with the Caspian Sea at Krasnovodsk. This canal was designed to be 1,100 kilometers in length and to run through the West Turkmen lowlands and the western part of the Kara-Kum desert. Three power stations, the most important one at Takhia-Tash, were planned. The main objectives of this project, aside from waterway linkage of Central Asia and the Black Sea, was to reclaim the desert for cotton cultivation and for improved livestock raising, and to supply water and electricity to industry to be established in that area.

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Stalin's death in March 1953 brought forth a wave of pledges by the builders to speed up the completion of the projects. The builders of the Turkmen Canal, for example, were reported to have taken an oath to complete the canal as a monument to Stalin.

The reassessment of Soviet domestic policy which took place following Malenkov's assumption of power undoubtedly included a re-evaluation of the construction of program. It is possible that in this period a decision was made to slow down or stop on certain installations. Moreover, the policy of the new regime to minimize references to Stalin in Soviet propaganda soon after it took control must have had an adverse effect on press treatment of the projects, which had been so closely linked with Stalin's name.

Publicity on the projects all but ceased between April and June of 1953. In July when the first anniversary of the completion of the Volga-Don Canal was marked, the canal was referred to in the press by name but without the customary characterization "first-born of the great projects," and there was no reference to Stalin.

Since that time references in Soviet sources to the power stations and some of the irrigation schemes have increased but there has been no mention of the Main Turkmen Canal or of the Volga-Ural Canal connected with the Stalingrad Project. The May Day and November anniversary slogans also omitted mention of the "Great Projects," in contrast to previous years.

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Changes in economic programs inaugurated by the Malenkov regime and transfer of the agency responsible for the planning and direction of the projects from the Ministry of Internal Affairs to the Ministry of Power Stations have effected the status of the Turkmen Canal and most probably of the Volga-Ural Canal. These appear to have been either dropped or suspended in favor of shorter-term construction to aid in more immediate achievement of the new agricultural program. The other projects appear to be progressing more or less on schedule.

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It is not yet apparent whether the cessation of work at the Turkmen Canal and probably also at the Volga Ural Canal constitute temporary suspension or an outright abandonment. A. Korniyev, writing in Voprosy Ekonomiki (No.6,1952) made it clear that many of the basic problems related to the construction of the Turkmen Canal had not yet been solved. The major role in conducting research and survey work on this and the Stalingrad project and in directing the work of other agencies belonged to Gidroproyekt. The transfer of this agency to the electrical ministry may have had a disrupting effect on progress of the basic studies for the canal projects.

From press accounts it was apparent that the surveyors of the giant canal were only a few miles ahead of the diggers. Under these conditions and considering the magnitude of the problems involved in an undertaking of this size in a largely unexplored desert region, cessation or even a delay in survey work would entail a stoppage of building. There is no evidence on whether another agency has taken over the survey work of whether it has been abandoned.